2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1958) 1960 8V3 Ha81.8V3

175 173 263 533 539

Oreste Zamor, pressé pou' embarké!
Oreste Zamor, pressé pou' embarké!
Ou pas tendé l'armée Davilmar rentré pou' Gonaïves?

Oreste Zamor, you'd better embark!
Oreste Zamor, you'd better embark!
Haven't you heard Davilmar's army has entered Gonaïves?

Gonaïves seems to have been the crucial point for invading armies from the north. Whenever revolutionary troops entered this town, the president holding office prepared to leave. True to the tradition, the Zamors sailed for a foreign shore, and Davilmar Théodore became the new executive. Although his tenure was to last only three months, there was much excitement when he entered the capital:

A la théâtre, à la bamboche!
Pou' djolle musique à droit à gauche!
La ville embrouillé ça qui gainyain,
C'est Davilmar kapé rentré!
Davilmar, dur, dur!
Manchete cano pas nen betise!
Papa Da dur, dur!
Manchete Lecoste pas nen betise!
Davilmar, dur, dur!

Celebrations and dancing!
Tooting horns to right and left!
The city is in an uproar,
It is Davilmar who is coming in!
Davilmar, hard, hard!
The canos were nothing to laugh at!
Papa Da is hard, hard!
Lecoste's army was nothing to laugh at!
Davilmar is hard, hard!

175 648 [662]

In 1915 came the United States intervention in Haiti, with the prime objective of freezing out German commercial and political interests. A president named Guillaume Sam had assassinated his political enemies in the prison at Port-au-Prince and had, in turn, been dragged out of the French consulate and killed. The benefits of the American occupation of Haiti are hotly debated to this day, though it is about thirty years since the United States military forces were withdrawn. Some Haitians think the occupation was a good lesson in politics, and that Haiti benefited in many ways. Others continue to look upon it as an overt expression of American diplomacy by force. One of the early assignments of the U.S. Marines in Haiti was the destruction of the

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175 643 661 such an example of rigor might spread. The moral element of the population had long looked askance at his libertinage; his first act upon entering a town during a visit of state was regularly to have his aides select for him the most attractive females in the vicinity, with whom he would spend more time than at the business of governing. [1103] Not even his army was sorrowful over his death. He had let his loyal troops go for months without pay, and then, reviewing a group of them one day, taunted and railed at them for their ragged uniforms. "You look as naked as a bunch of old beetles!" he cried.

Dessalines had restored order to his country and had founded a state. Both achievements rested upon a display of force which inspired cringing fear and denied normal human aspirations. His entire social and economic order was based upon the subservience of the many to the few.

2. *Christophe* (*1807–1820*)

175 178 Until 1807 all Haitians had the same political background—the French colonial régime, revolution, the governorship of Toussaint, and the stern rule of Dessalines. Now the common path forked. Two avenues were opened up during the next dozen years, one by Christophe, the other by his Southern and mulatto rival, Pétion. The former was the road of discipline, hard work, and feudal control; the latter was one of persuasion, *laissez faire*, and small properties. Haiti ultimately chose the second.

175 643 642 662 The logical successor to Dessalines was his powerful Negro henchman, Christophe.[1] This black general felt so certain of his leadership that he did not even bother to attend the *Assemblée Constituante* which was to choose the new head of state. The mulattoes, however, had agreed among themselves that they had had enough of rule by ignorant ex-slaves. They consequently performed the very skillful manœuvre of preparing a constitution which should effectively shear a new president of dictatorial power; this done, they dutifully elected Christophe to the presidential office. The wrathful general peremptorily declined to rule by virtue of so anæmic a document, and led his army southward to demand proper respect for his august

1. The name Christophe was taken from the English Caribbean island of St. Christopher, on which this black slave was born. Later in life he took as his first name Henry, spelling it in the English fashion rather than the French, as an indication of his wholehearted admiration of English people and English ways.

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person. To his evident surprise he was met not by meek submission, but by the army of the mulatto Pétion. Christophe was not defeated; neither was he victorious. He was obliged to retire in high dudgeon to his loyal supporters in the North, where he proceeded to set up a state according to his own idea of what a state should be.

The Assembly thereupon outlawed Christophe on the ground of rebellion against constituted authority, electing in his stead their great favorite Pétion, whose power as president of the Republic was to be limited by the new constitution. For the next thirteen years, from 1807 to 1820, the tiny country with its 10,000 square miles was divided, Christophe ruling in the North and in the fertile valley of the Artibonite, and Pétion governing until his death in 1818 in the West and South, the main strongholds of the colored element.

Christophe was of the stuff that myths are made of. He was indisputably Haiti's most dynamic, relentlessly effective, and dramatic ruler of the nineteenth century. Like Toussaint and Dessalines, he was a black ex-slave, and like them he had won his spurs as a military leader during the revolution. He was an ardent patriot whose love for his country did not lead to retrogressive chauvinism. Whereas Dessalines through fear and hatred of the French had excluded all white men from Haiti, Christophe had the perspicacity to see that the country could benefit from the contribution of whites. Englishmen he especially welcomed. Like his predecessors Christophe drove his people—with a tyrant's lash, many thought—but only to increase the glory of Haiti.

Christophe had a vaulting imagination which brought glamour even to practical expedients. He built a colossal fortress on a high mountain in the North, partly for defense, but partly to make his contemned Negro people feel that they could achieve one of the architectural and engineering marvels of the age. His exquisite palace, Sans Souci, not only satisfied his own vanity as a ruler but also provided a focal point for the imagination and loyalty of his subjects. In 1811 he had himself crowned king, Henry I, amidst pomp and circumstance—and then created a royal court, partly to reward his leaders, partly to get the fees for patents of nobility, but primarily to bind all important men in the country to himself and to the Haitian state with unbreakable personal bonds. Dramatic in almost every particular of his life and reign, he ruled for thirteen years more through force of personality than by tyranny. Taxes were heavy

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Next to the agricultural system, the state of education in the republic probably had as much to do as anything with fixing the caste system upon Haiti. So long as the mass of people were not only black but illiterate as well, they would have no means of reaching a social status beyond the one in which they existed. Certainly the aspiring Negroes would not wish to enlighten them, for to stir up the whole people would destroy the very possibility of distinction. As W. S. Gilbert puts it, "When everyone is somebody, then no one's anybody." Public education, consequently, hardly advanced a step during Boyer's twenty-five years. It had had a feeble enough beginning under Pétion and remained, as it had been, a prerogative of the well-to-do.[58]

Under the complaisant rule of Boyer, accordingly, the people of color came to regard themselves as the unquestioned élite. Their claim was shared, though not always acknowledged, by a small number of blacks (mostly from the North) who had been anciens libres in colonial Saint-Domingue or noblemen under Christophe; who were literate, or whose wealth and ambition attracted attention. Boyer's boast that "all the feelings and prejudices, either of olden times or of national origin, have been superseded by an intense patriotism" was pure buncombe, as he certainly knew.

If only the best brains of the colored group had been content to serve the government, Haiti might have profited from her situation; but lesser government offices were merely springboards for foreign trade in coffee and mahogany, or for the manipulation of business deals. Not "intense patriotism," as Boyer liked to think, but financial gain was the motivating force of the élite, as it had been from colonial times. The man who could amass a modest fortune, so that his children might be educated and their security assured, had done his duty, and he would have been regarded as quixotic to renounce business opportunities for the dubious honor of minor political office. As a consequence of this natural search for gain, the government during Boyer's administration became less and less efficient. Relatives of élite businessmen were given posts because the President could not afford to offend important families. These minor officials then performed their duties awkwardly, or neglected them, in "the unfailing obliquity of dullness."

Skin color became the obsession of high society. Those who had no other merit of which to boast could still revel in their complex-

58. See chap. XVI.

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175 choice of a leader. Not gifted with administrative ability, Hérard
643 blundered first by imprisoning one of the most popular Negro leaders in the country, thereby turning much of the population of the South against him. Next, learning of conspiracies in the Spanish
[669] end of the island, he tried to stamp out revolt by exile and jail sentences, only to precipitate there a real revolution for independence. In his fight against the Dominican separatists he was roundly defeated, and his prestige sank rapidly to the vanishing point. Within two months after his inauguration, he had only one third of the island left over which to attempt to rule. Within a year he was out of power altogether and with him the colored people.

175 The Revolution of 1844, although supported by certain old friends
669 of Boyer, was chiefly a movement of Negroes—followers of the imprisoned black, Salomon; peasants from the South who had been promised much by the previous year's revolutionaries and had got nothing; and particularly the Negro army clique. The significant part of the new revolution was its announced purpose, to lessen the influence of the colored group in government, to have a black president, and to dispossess certain reputedly well-to-do citizens by
[643] dividing their estates among the people. Quickly successful, the insurgents promoted to the presidency the illiterate octogenarian black general, Guerrier, who in Christophe's kingdom had been Duke of Marmalade[1] and Duke of Avancé.

175 For the first time in a quarter-century the Negro element was
643 again in the saddle, where it was to remain for the next fifteen years. Everyone recognized Guerrier's personal courage and admired the
• 662 common sense which made him prefer conciliation to unnecessary violence as a method of government, but the colored people were shocked at having to live under the rule of another black ex-slave. The idea evoked grim memories. Knowing Guerrier's addiction to drink, the colored faction managed to make him a tool for their own use, so that his brief administration, ending with his death in 1845, was generally known as a "government of understudies." Guerrier was followed in the presidency by another black, likewise an octo-
175 genarian: Louis Pierrot, the handsome brother-in-law of King
643 Christophe. But Pierrot was even more ignorant than Guerrier and

[554] 1. This title generally evokes amusement among non-Haitians. Christophe had merely named his peers after districts whose names had been given by French planters in the eighteenth century. Another of his noblemen was a Count of Limonade.

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175 material—Frenchmen who lived "in a deplorable state of morals,
111 too often recalling those of the freebooters and buccaneers" who were their ancestors and predecessors. Even when the calibre of the colonists improved, religion was a minor concern, business and pleasure pushing it well into the background.

There was no great antagonism toward the fathers; indeed, not enough attention was paid to the priests and their work to warrant any very strong feeling. It was indifference and insolence the fathers had to face, or, if they showed too great an interest in the welfare of slaves upon a plantation, suspicion and peremptory curbs. By the old [671] Code Noir under which the colony theoretically operated, masters were obligated to send their slaves to Mass on Sundays and feast days under penalty of heavy fines; the Code likewise prescribed the baptism of all blacks and their instruction in the Catholic faith. But just as the colonists ignored all parts of the Code antagonistic to their own economic interests, so specifically did they disregard the sections dealing with their religious obligations.

175 Some priests were in any case not too zealous. It was much more
793 agreeable to attend only to external forms, and so participate in the charming life of high society, than to stand firm against laxity. If a
• 662 priest showed enthusiasm for his duties to his African charges he was
567 almost certain to be accused by the planters of stirring up the slaves
[792] and undermining the foundations of colonial society. This was, in fact, the very accusation leveled at the Jesuits to bring about their expulsion from the colony in 1764. The example was not lost upon other priests.

175 "The safety of the whites demands that the Negroes be kept in
111 profound ignorance," said one of the later governors in a message to
563 France. This sentiment, perfectly expressing the conviction of the majority of planters, not only prevented any secular education of the blacks, but actually kept many of them from instruction in catechism, creed, or any part of the Catholic faith. If instruction is forbidden, few of the sacraments can be administered, for how can a person be confirmed, confess, do penance, if he know not even the first principles of the faith? Few masters objected to the baptism of slave children; on the other hand, they soundly disapproved of the sacrament of marriage for their blacks, since this might place an obstacle in the way of slave sales, and even open the way for assimilation of blacks and whites in the colony.

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whites patrolling the streets seems to have given reality to criticism which before then would have been academic. The élite were back again in the political forum. Unreflecting patriotism urged the immediate withdrawal of the Marines, but a considerable number of the legislature saw that it would be years before they left. The problem, then, they saw variously: some wished to be eloquent spokesmen for the patriotic anti-whites and did their best to embarrass the Occupation; some, feeling that the Americans were benefiting the country, tried to make things move smoothly; while others, seeing a fertile field for gain, tried to ingratiate themselves with the American authorities.

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The twenty years between 1915 and 1934 heard many eloquent, impassioned speeches, not all of them coming to the same conclusions. The élite were divided in most issues raised by the Occupation, so that the old neat dichotomy between élite and army no longer prevailed. The President, Dartiguenave (1915–22), was for the first time since 1879 a Southerner and a mulatto; yet in 1922 when he was a candidate for reëlection it was Southern élite votes which defeated him. Executive, legislature, and judiciary all had just enough power under the Occupation to make subtle manoeuvres, and all three branches of the government displayed a real genius for the political game. They often succeeded in putting the onus of an unpopular act upon the Americans, and in taking the credit for popular measures with which they had had little to do. They prodded and pricked all the weaknesses in the logic of the American State Department. They forced numerous concessions. If at times they seem to have been overclever, playing the game of politics merely for an opportunity to display their skill, at other times many of them showed a deep understanding of realities which had to be faced.

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The Occupation, ordered by that high prophet of democracy, Woodrow Wilson, professed its determination to give Haiti her first opportunity to be democratic. Yet the Marines really dictated the choice both of Dartiguenave in 1915 and of Borno in 1922 and 1926. The constitution of 1918 was prepared in Washington; it was submitted to a plebiscite, but the farcical vote—69,337 for and 335 against—was clearly the result of electioneering by the Marines. The presidents of Haiti ruled with executive councils, subject to Ameri-